

PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN PERFINS - by Jonathan Johnson

On September 10, 1924, the Provincial Treasury of the Province of Saskatchewan received approval from the Post Office to perforate stamps used by the department with the initials "PS". All departments of the Provincial government were required to use these perforated stamps on their mail, which were obtained by written requisition from the Treasury department. The procedure was used as an internal security and control system over the use of postage stamps by various government departments.

As listed in the latest edition of the Handbook, two major types of PS design are recorded. P10 was used between 1924 and 1931, and P10a, with its more rounded "p", between approximately 1927 and 1972 (see Figure 1). Close examination of the Perfin design reveals, however, that a third type or variety, used between 1924 and 1931, can be collected by the specialist.



Fig. 1

Fig. 2

As seen in Figure 2, this shifted pin variety, which I choose to call P10b, shows a misalignment of the third pin hole at the top of the letter "p" giving it a flattened appearance. The variety is constant and can be found on settings 2, 3 and 5 in a row of ten impressions of the PS perforator. I have been able to prove this constant variety through a recreated plated sheet of Saskatchewan Power Commission revenue stamps, issued in 1929, which clearly show the P10b variety setting. Figure 3 illustrates one of these revenue stamps with P10 punched on the left and P10b punched on the right side of the stamp.

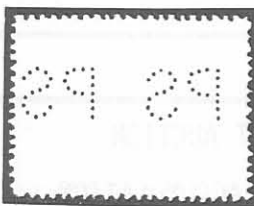


Fig. 3

Note: this is a simulation of the original illustration, which would not have reproduced well.

Although P10b is a minor variety, it is the only constant shift in pin settings in a Perfin design found to date. P10b has been found in a good cross section of stamps usually associated with P10 designs and one may consider that the shift was incurred in the manufacture of the perforator and not caused by wear during usage. Unfortunately, no records have been found to identify the make and model of perforator, but severe damage in the form of broken pins caused it to be replaced sometime between September, 1929, and July, 1930, with a new perforator which we know as design P10a. Out of a

total of twenty-eight pins forming the design of PS, P10 is known with fifteen broken pins, and P10b with twelve broken pins.

The P10a design comes from a Cummins Model 53 perforator, which has the capacity of perforating four sheets at a time, ten stamps wide. It is not known if P10a is a repaired version of the machine which gives us P10 and P10b designs, or was a brand new machine. It will be of interest that during the change-over period, P10 can be found on such uncommon stamps as No. 190 and 197, while P10a is known on Nos. 105, 109, 114, and 119. Plagued by bad luck, P10a soon began to show damage, and broken pins can be found shortly after the machine's introduction. By the early 1960's, damage was so severe that stamps have been found with only five pins remaining. In 1962, the Cummins perforator was sent to OK Rubber Stamp Company in Regina for repairs, as the original manufacturer had gone out of business. OK Rubber, lacking spare parts, used Gramophone needles to replace missing pins!

Brought back into use again, P10a only occasionally showed a missing hole, but in November, 1972, the perforator jammed for the last time. Unable to locate anyone to effect repairs, the government department intends to retire the machine to the Provincial Archives shortly. P10a has been reported on 280 different stamps between 1927? and 1972, and quite an impressive collection can be developed, as this number represents about 66 percent of all stamps released by the Post Office during the period.

In theory, it should be possible to collect identical collections of P10 and P10b designs on 32 different stamps between 1924 and 1931? It is also possible to find two of the Wrigley positions on most stamps punched PS. Three positions are quite difficult, although collections exist with five positions on No. 488, 521, 524, and 533, and six positions on No. Ell.

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